

**Comments to the Dehcho Land Use Planning Committee on the
Draft Dehcho Land Use Plan – Revised Draft November 2005**

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By:

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Ducks Unlimited Canada
CANADA'S CONSERVATION COMPANY

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) would like to thank the Dehcho Land Use Planning Committee for the opportunity to review and comment on the revised Draft Dehcho Land Use Plan and for the consideration given to our previous input. We appreciate the magnitude of this undertaking and respect the care and consideration the Committee has taken to address the concerns of multiple interests and stakeholders to create a land use plan that balances conservation with economic development. The comments and recommendations in this submission are additional to those in our previous submissions which we continue to support.

The Plan Overall

Along with the Dehcho First Nations and others, DUC is a signatory to the Boreal Forest Conservation Framework and a member of the Boreal Leadership Council, whose goal it is to conserve the cultural, natural, and sustainable economic values of Canada's boreal region. In this capacity we support the Dehcho in their efforts to conserve approximately 50% of their region and to maintain connectivity between those conservation areas. Many of these areas are wetland rich and important for waterfowl and the maintenance of healthy wetland ecosystems. As part of the Edehzie Candidate Protected Area working group and other PAS projects in the Dehcho, we support the incorporation of the PAS process into the Plan as we believe it is an important component of land use planning in the Northwest Territories.

Cumulative Effects Management

As development of renewable and non-renewable resources is important for the economy of Dehcho communities, we support and applaud the important work the Planning Committee has done with Cumulative Effects Management. The Committee has taken the important step of including a precautionary base from which to build upon further research as called for in the Plan.

Federal Wetlands Conservation Policy

We are especially supportive of the Draft Plan in highlighting the importance of maintaining healthy wetland ecosystems and water quality for the benefit of people and wildlife, including waterfowl. As outlined in the Plan this objective is supported by a number of Federal and Territorial policies and strategies. Although not cited in the Draft Plan, Canada's Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation supports these water and wetland protection goals as its objective is to "*promote the conservation of Canada's wetlands to sustain their ecological and socio-economic functions, now and in the future.*" The Policy recognizes the significant financial value of healthy, functioning wetlands to all Canadians placing their monetary worth in the billions annually. The Policy supports the Draft Plan and the Dehcho people's efforts by stating under Strategy 2 that the Federal Government will "*Promote a cooperative approach to wetland conservation initiatives for lands and waters held by the federal government for native peoples (such as Indian Reserves and lands and waters transferred to native peoples*

under comprehensive land claim settlements) in consultation and cooperation with native institutions and peoples.”

As well, in our last submission we recommended that the Plan include provisions for no net loss of wetland habitat in the Dehcho and were pleased to see this as Conformity Requirement #15 under Water Monitoring and Management. Canada’s Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation also supports this concept under Strategy 2 where it states that the Federal Government will “*Commit all federal departments to the goal of no net loss of wetland functions on federal lands and waters, in areas affected by the implementation of federal programs where the continuing loss or degradation of wetlands has reached critical levels, and where federal activities affect wetlands designated as ecologically or socio-economically important to a region.*” This policy was not cited in the Draft Plan and we would recommend it be referenced to support Water Monitoring and Management, Cumulative Effects Management and those zones that contain important wetland habitats whether they are within Conservation, Special Management or General Use Zones. A copy of the policy and its accompanying implementation guide has been attached to this submission for your records.

We hope our input has been helpful in assisting the committee and Dehcho people in developing the Draft Plan and look forward to assisting in the future.

Sincerely,

Jason Charlwood
Ducks Unlimited Canada